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SCIENCE

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SCIENTIFIC TRUTH AND THE SCIENTIFIC SPIRIT¹

IN appearing before you this evening in my present rôle I can not but recall an incident of fifty-five years ago, which often recurs to my mind when I think of the events of to-day.

The trustees of the Smithsonian Institution in 1861 were preparing their programme for the year, and in this programme were courses of lectures to be given to the public on a series of selected topics. Their intention was announced and they were importuned to devote those lectures to what was at that time in everybody's mind. It was the first year of your great war of the Secession. I say your war, but I might, with some justification, have called it our war, for there fought in the ranks of the armies of the North 68,000 British citizens, of whom 45,000 were Canadians, and of the latter 15,000 lost their lives. There were even then stop-the-war people, prototypes of the Fords, the Akeds, the Jane Addamses and the Lloyd Joneses of to-day, futile, mole-visioned and cloister-minded, who imagined that the great conflict could be prevented by talking and they wished to avail themselves of the opportunity the lectures might present of showing how it could be done.

The trustees apparently wished to be neutral, perhaps they were uncertain what the upshot of the conflict was going to be, and this may have helped them to decide, as they did, that all war topics should be

¹ Address delivered at the annual dinner of the Columbia Biochemical Association, February 10, 1916.